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THE CHEMISTRY AND PHYSICS OF CONTRACEPTIVES. By Cecil I. B. Voge, B.Sc., Ph.D., F.R.S. Edin. Jonathan Cape, London, 1933. Pp. 288. 32 illustrations. Price 12s. 6d.

DR. VOGUE has produced a book which, for the first time in England, devotes itself wholly to the Chemistry and Physics of Contraceptives and, therefore, automatically occupies a place of definite importance in the scientific literature on this subject.

The book is for medical readers and lay scientists who will find it interesting, but it cannot have an appeal to Everyman.

Early in this work the anatomy of male and female reproductive systems is studied, but thereafter the book is occupied solely with the result of serious investigations, over a term of three years, into the chemical contraceptives in use in England and on the Continent of Europe. The question of rubber appliances and their dependability is carefully gone into also.

Dr. Voge's work shows by careful experimentation the uselessness for their purpose of many relatively expensive contraceptives and the comparative usefulness of others: and his aim is to find or advise as to the making of the perfect Chemical Contraceptive.

The author demonstrates that by using acids to alter the pH of the vagina to less than 6, or more than 10, spermatozoa become immobilised: but if the chemical action producing this effect is of short duration, it is possible that mobility may be restored later to the spermatozoa, and so the Contraceptive Effect is lost. When discussing the effects of various metals as contraceptives, Dr. Voge shows that the usefulness of the silver von Gräfenberg intra-uterine ring is dependent on the liberation of silver ions within the uterus, killing any spermatozoa which may reach it, or preventing impregnation of the ovum. Dr. Voge is occupied purely with the chemical action of each metal, so does not mention Endometritis or uterine hæmorrhage, which has been quoted as following the use of this appliance in some cases.

References to other authors are very extensive and occasionally amusing: as when the argument is put forward by one in 1931 that the decrease in the birth rate among the more wealthy at the close of the nineteenth century was due in part to use of hot soapy baths, as about this time hot-water systems were installed. The hot bath is also blamed as causing perhaps a thermo-sterilisation of the male gonad.

In addition to considering carefully Acids, Alkalis, Metals and Organic Compounds as Contraceptives, the vehicle for spermicides is discussed in detail by the author. A chapter is devoted to proprietary chemical spermicides mentioned by name: Foam tablets and Foam jellies being dealt with in turn.

The Chemical Composition of Rubber for vaginal caps and for

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condoms is discussed, as is the effect of various reagents in causing cracks or making the rubber inefficient.

The author's conclusion after deep thought is that the "2% irreducible minimum of failures" reported by contraceptive clinics *is* capable of still further reduction from the chemical standpoint: but that "the lazy, the careless, the ignorant and the obstinate will be with us to the end."

An admirable Bibliography, 2 Appendices and an Index conclude the book, which must be found of practical importance by many workers in Venereal Diseases. To so many of our patients, for a time at least, the birth of a child is undesirable: and yet too long continued abstinence after the acute infective period is over tends simply to an exacerbation of social and physical problems.

Our thanks and praise are due to Dr. Voge for his careful scientific and impersonal discussion of a subject which is even yet repugnant to many doctors.

M. R.

ANNUAL REPORT FOR 1932 OF THE CITY AND ROYAL BURGH OF EDINBURGH VENEREAL DISEASES SCHEME. Dr. David Lees, D.S.O., Clinical Medical Officer, with a foreword by Dr. John Guy, Medical Officer of Health.

THE annual report on the Edinburgh Venereal Diseases Scheme is always an important and valuable contribution to medical and sociological literature, and that describing the work done in 1932 is no exception.

The salient features are (1) a reduction in the number of new cases of syphilis, (2) a decrease in the number of children under one year of age who suffer from inherited syphilis, (3) an increase in the number of attendances per individual, and (4) a reduction in the defaulter rate. All these are very gratifying, but, as Dr. Lees points out, "Further progress could undoubtedly be made in controlling venereal disease if the Public Health Authority were given a measure of greater administrative control over infected patients." This, no doubt, refers to the question of compulsory notification of certain cases of venereal disease, so that the defaulter could be dealt with even more adequately. Whether the pledge of secrecy under which patients now resort to Venereal Disease Clinics is a potent factor in inducing early attendance and whether there would be an increase of those who would not attend a clinic or even obtain any medical treatment at all, if compulsory notification, even of failure to continue treatment only, were introduced, is a highly debatable point, but Dr. Lees with his long experience evidently thinks it is worth a trial.

An important feature of the Edinburgh Scheme is that Dr. Lees is the clinical medical officer, not of one clinic only, but of the whole of the Scheme, and that his department is an integral and important section of the work of the General Public Health Services of the city. He reports not only on the centre at the Royal Infirmary, but also on (1) Subsidiary centres for the Royal Infirmary, (2) The Hospital for Women and Children and Subsidiary Centres, (3) The Royal Maternity Hospital, and (4) the Seamen's Dispensary, Leith. He also utilises, in connection with the Scheme, the services of the consultants in the